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Emergency Responders Learn How to Manage Large Animals

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When large animals are loose, somebody has to round them up, and often first responders with little or no training are called upon. MPB's Daniel Cherry reports how emergency responders across Mississippi are getting hands on experience with large animals.

The Mississippi Department of Homeland Security brought in national experts who know how best to diffuse potentially dangerous situations involving large animals. Jay Ledbetter, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Homeland Security says responders in the state have to be ready for anything.

"If it's not like a hurricane type disaster what we're looking at is an overturned tractor trailer on the interstate. We're looking at an overturned rail car with large animals like this involved, whether it be beef or whether it's equine. You're also looking at something like what happened up north with the exotic animals. All of the skills they learn here transfer directly either way."

In one portion participants learned how to remove a large animal stuck in mud...using real hoses and even one llama.

Lance Cooper with Rankin County Emergency Operations says this isn't stuff they normally learn on the job.

"Typically we're rescuing human beings. Large animal rescue is something that we're just now learning about because there is a need for it. Animals are unpredictable. It's taught us a lot about how animals will react to these situations."

Safety for all involved is top priority. Dr Jim Watson is the State Veterinarian with the Mississippi Board of Animal Health. He says these kinds of situations can be risky not only for the animal in danger but also for the responders trying to help.

"It's very dangerous when you're dealing with a 1,000lb. plus animal that's trapped, that's injured, frightened. How to do that properly and come out with people who are not injured and a safe healthy animal." Homeland security sponsored the training because in Mississippi agriculture is considered critical infrastructure.